

A Message to All Employees

Dear Colleagues,

As part of Memorial Sloan Kettering's commitment to review our conflict of interest policies and processes, we want to provide you with an update on the progress of the Conflict of Interest (COI) Task Force. Some of the early recommendations and principles that the Executive Committee of the Board of Managers has approved were shared at this morning's Medical Staff Meeting.

After robust and constructive dialogue and feedback from faculty and staff, we assembled a task force with representatives from the medical staff, SKI faculty, nursing, administration, and the external academic community to review our COI policies and procedures and make recommendations to strengthen them. The task force has also engaged external experts for counsel, including the law firm of Ropes & Gray for a comprehensive benchmarking analysis of 20 leading academic medical centers from across the country – including both hospitals and research institutes. The task force is working with a team from Deloitte to assess the COI program and processes. The law firm of Debevoise & Plimpton is conducting a focused review of a series of anonymous allegations concerning COI issues. The task force is also seeking input from internal and external stakeholders, including members of the Medical Staff, SKI, and the Patient and Family Advisory Council on Quality.

Thanks to these efforts, and the exceptional feedback from so many members of the MSK community, we are building on our outstanding reputation in cancer care and research by ensuring even greater transparency and oversight with regard to conflicts of interest and collaboration with industry. While we have a great deal of work still ahead of us, the task force's final recommendations will establish clear guidelines for how we can continue to work collaboratively with partners in the larger cancer community in a way that advances our mission through patient care, research, and education.

As part of the first phase of the task force's work, we recommended – and the Executive Committee of the MSK Board of Managers approved – the codification of the moratoriums announced in the fall. These rules address investments in spin-offs by MSK board members, representation on the boards of spin-off companies, and the ability of Senior Executive Officers to serve on the boards of for-profit companies. In summary:

- Senior Executive Officers at MSK will no longer be permitted to serve on the boards of directors of external for-profit health- or science-related entities. Any exception to this rule would require affirmative approval by the Executive Committee of the Board of Managers as well as a compelling institutional reason for making such an exception. Our Senior Executive Officers include the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Physician-in-Chief, and Director of the Sloan Kettering Institute.
- MSK's Office of Technology Development will assess whether MSK should have a governance role in an MSK spin-off company and not presume that we should have a voting seat on the board. Additionally, any compensation

associated with this type of board service will be required to be directed to MSK. No MSK Senior Executive Officers or any other officers of the institution will be permitted to serve on the board of an MSK spin-off company. Appointment of any MSK employee to the board of a spin-off company will require MSK board-level oversight.

- Going forward, members of the MSK Boards of Overseers and Managers will not be permitted to invest in or serve on the board of a company that is a spin-off of MSK. There will also be clear conditions in place to govern how entities with which a board member is affiliated may invest in an MSK spin-off — primarily having to do with recusal and confidentiality. In addition, such an investment will be subject to MSK board-level oversight.

We recognize that this is only a start and there are a number of additional items for the COI Task Force to address — including those that affect faculty who serve on outside boards, participate in scientific advisory boards, or engage in other personal consulting activities. At the end of February, the task force intends to release draft recommendations and provide you with an opportunity to offer feedback before moving forward with new guidelines.

More information on the work of the COI Task Force is available on [OneMSK](#) and relevant updates will be shared via email and through other usual communications channels. As we make progress, we want to be fully transparent and communicate with you along the way. I'd also like to invite anyone with questions, comments, or concerns for the task force to please email them to compliance@mskcc.org or contact me directly.

Finally, as part of our continued work looking at issues related to disclosure and the biomedical journal community, MSK is co-hosting a symposium next month that will bring together experts and stakeholders from across the biomedical research community as a first step toward developing a common framework that harmonizes financial disclosures in research publications.

I am grateful for the ongoing hard work and dedication of the task force, but let me close by saying how impressed I have been with the level of constructive engagement shown by all of MSK's stakeholders. I especially appreciate how involved our faculty has been in this effort. Hundreds of thousands of patients continue to depend on your unmatched expertise and talent, and our goal is to address thoroughly and efficiently our conflict of interest policies so that we remain fully focused on our mission and continue to be the best in the world at preventing, treating, and curing cancer.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on these important matters.

Sincerely,

Debra Berns
Senior Vice President and Chief Risk Officer